

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1 - 28 (cancelled)

29. (new) A mortarboard configured for operative use by masons and brick layers at a construction site, comprising;

a. a generally rectangular sheet material having an outermost thickness of at least about 0.5 inches and defining a broad continuous substantially flat upper working surface;

b. said upper working surface being sized and configured to retainably hold an operative quantity of cementitious mortar to be worked by an operator such as by mixing with a trowel or shovel, and being impervious to retain moisture in the mortar; and

c. said sheet of material defining a cut-out handle portion formed entirely through said sheet material adjacent one edge of said material and sized to accept an adult person's hand or fork-lift tine to facilitate carrying of said mortarboard in a generally vertical manner when not in operative use.

30. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said impervious upper working surface comprises polymer material.

31. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said sheet material comprises polymer material.

32. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said outermost thickness of said sheet material is between about 0.5 to 1 inch.

33. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the board-like sheet of material has a width dimension measured between first and second opposed edges and a height dimension

measured between third and fourth opposed edges, wherein said width and height dimensions are greater or equal to about 24 inches.

34. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said cut-out handle portion has a width of greater or equal to about 6 inches.

35. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the weight of the mortarboard is about 5 pounds.

36. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, further including a plurality of support ribs integrally formed with said sheet material, configured and arranged to provide structural support for said upper working surface.

37. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, further including raised peripheral lip portions along at least three sides of said upper working surface.

38. (new) The mortarboard of claim 37, wherein said raised peripheral lip portions extent less than about 0.375 inches above the upper working surface.

39. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said upper working surface is slightly contoured in continuous dished-out manner across the extent of said working surface.

40. (new) The mortarboard of claim 39, wherein the radius of curvature of the dished-out contour of said working surface is larger than the largest width or height dimension of said working surface.

41. (new) The mortarboard of claim 39, wherein a lowermost portion of the dished-out upper working surface is recessed less than about 0.5 inches from an uppermost portion of the upper working surface.

42. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein the material is configured so that a front and rear surface of the material will nest together with other mortarboards of like construction, when more than one mortarboards are stacked together.

43. (new) The mortarboard of claim 29, wherein said sheet material is of a strength to resist breaking or damage to said working surface when struck by construction tools such as hammers.

44. (new) A strong, lightweight mortarboard configured for operable use by masons and brick layers at a construction site, comprising:

a. a board-like sheet material having an outermost thickness of at least about 0.5 inches and defining a continuous smooth solid broad upper working surface extending generally across the entire width of said sheet material between opposed side edges thereof;

b. said upper working surface being sized and configured to retainably hold an operative quantity of cementitious mortar to be worked by an operator, such as by mixing with a trowel or shovel, and being impervious to retain moisture in the mortar; and

c. said sheet material being slightly contoured across said upper working surface in dished-out manner to form a single continuous arcuate contour across the working surface;

d. whereby an operator can work mortar on said mortarboard by moving a trowel or shovel in a sweeping motion without engaging any irregularities across the mortarboard that would interfere with continuous movement of said shovel or trowel during the mortar working operation.

45. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said upper working surface comprising polymer material.

46. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said sheet material comprises polymer material.

47. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said outermost thickness of said sheet material is between about 0.5 to 1 inch.

48. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, further including a carrying handle for carrying the mortarboard in generally vertical manner when not in operative use.

49. (new) The mortarboard of claim 48, wherein said carrying handle comprises a cut-out portion defined by said sheet material extending entirely through said sheet material.

50. (new) The mortarboard of claim 48, wherein said carrying handle defines an aperture sized and configured to operatively accept a person's hand or a tine of a fork-lift therethrough.

51. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, further including a plurality of support ribs integrally formed with said sheet material, configured and arranged to provide support for said upper working surface in a manner so as to not interfere with the smooth continuous nature of said working surface.

52. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein a lowermost portion of said dished-out working surface is recessed less than about 0.5 inches from an uppermost portion of the working surface.

53. (new) The mortarboard of claim 52, wherein a lowermost portion of said dished-out working surface is recessed less than about 0.375 inches from an uppermost portion of the working surface.

54. (new) The mortarboard of claim 53, wherein a lowermost portion of said dished-out working surface is recessed less than about 0.25 inches from an uppermost portion of the working surface.

55. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the contour of said upper working surface has a single radius of curvature about a point located generally above a central portion of the working surface.

56. (new) The mortarboard of claim 55, wherein the radius of curvature is larger than the largest width or diameter dimension of said working surface.

57. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the upper working surface has a width dimension greater or equal to about 24 inches.

58. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the mortarboard further defines a bottom surface opposite of said working surface, arranged and configured to operatively accommodate a support stand for the mortarboard.

59. (new) A mortarboard of claim 44, wherein the material is configured so that a front and a rear surface of the material will nest together with other mortarboards of like construction when more than one mortarboards are stacked together.

60. (new) The mortarboard of claim 44, wherein said sheet material is of a strength to resist breaking or damage to said working surface when struck by construction tools such as hammers.

61. (new) A method of working cementitious mortar at a construction site, comprising the steps of:

- a. providing a mortarboard of sheet material having an outmost thickness of at least about 0.5 inches and defining a broad, continuous smooth upper working surface, and a handle formed by a cut-out portion of said material adjacent one edge thereof;
- b. carrying in generally vertical orientation said mortarboard by said handle, to a construction jobsite;
- c. placing said mortarboard on a support surface with said working surface thereof facing generally upward;
- d. depositing an operative quantity of wet cementitious material on said working surface; and
- e. working said mortar on said working surface with a mason's trowel or shovel to condition the mortar.

62. (new) The method of claim 61, including the step of providing a mortarboard wherein the upper working surface is contoured in continuous dished-out manner.

63. (new) The method of claim 61, wherein the upper working surface of the mortarboard is made of polymer material.

64. (new) The method of claim 61, wherein the sheet material of the mortarboard is made of polymer material.